

It is well known that mood can affect your food choices and equally, your food choices can affect your mood. Anxiety, low mood, irritability, lack of motivation and low energy levels can make it difficult to find the energy and motivation to choose healthy food choices.

When motivation and energy is lacking there may be a tendency to:

- Start comfort eating
- Choose a diet high in processed foods, foods rich in sugar/fat
- This will more likely exacerbate symptoms.



Foods that may improve your mental health include:

- Healthy fats:

Oily fish are rich sources of omega three oils e.g. salmon, mackerel, trout, sardines, herring, kippers, etc. Choose oily fish twice weekly.

Choose foods rich in monounsaturated oils e.g. try to use **olive oil or rapeseed oil** to cook with. Add unsalted nuts and seeds (ground or milled if required), and use olive or nut dressings on salads.

Reduce your intake of foods rich in '**trans**' **fats** e.g. processed and packaged foods such as processed meats, ready meals, pre-packed cakes and biscuits. 'Trans' (transhydrogenated) fat is thought to be harmful to brain function (as well as heart health). Instead choose fresh foods where possible.

- Wholegrain cereals, peas, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, fruits and vegetables are rich in a range of vitamins and minerals that your body needs to function well, including B vitamins and Zinc. Evidence suggests that foods rich in B vitamins and Zinc are important in managing depression.
- Eating regular meals, including breakfast, ensures that you will have enough energy to encourage good concentration.
- Comfort eating: A chemical in the brain called serotonin improves mood and how we feel. Foods rich in carbohydrate may increase serotonin levels in the brain. Choosing high fibre sources of carbohydrates (such as wholemeal or wholegrain breads, pasta, cereals, crackers, etc) can help with the slow steady release serotonin.





- Sweet cravings: Very often there can be a tendency to eat sweet foods to improve mood, but this can lead to a negative effect where the initial rush of eating high sugar food can lead to a low, and thereby increase cravings more.

(Ref: www.bda.com)

In summary:

- Aim to eat three meals a day
- Include fruit in between meals.
- Try to include oily fish twice a week
- Choose wholegrain cereals, bread, pasta, crackers etc.
- Limit foods high in sugars and fats to a planned specific time in the week.

